[redacted]

EL SALVADOR: Military Lagging on Human Rights

Apparent foot-dragging in the six-month-old investigation of the murders of the six Jesuit priests and persistent allegations of abuses are overshadowing the Salvadoran military's efforts to improve its human rights image. [redacted]

The military has taken several steps in recent months to appear more responsive to human rights concerns. [redacted] the High Command has secretly named a permanent military human rights board to investigate alleged abuses by military personnel. Defense Minister Larios recently promised a rapid response to judicial requests for information on the Jesuit case. [redacted]

Despite these efforts, the judge who presides over the Jesuit investigation announced this month that the military is not cooperating with it. Several members of a military honor board appointed by President Cristiani to investigate military involvement in the killings recently failed to comply with the judge's summons to appear in court. Judicial authorities recently released soldiers involved in other illegal killings in 1988. [redacted]

Meanwhile, Chief of Staff Ponce is moving slowly on removing commanders implicated in human rights crimes. The reassignment of the 5th Brigade commander, involved in trying to cover up the murder of 10 peasants by soldiers in his command two years ago, has been repeatedly delayed. After several months of deliberations, the High Command last month reassigned Col. Roberto Staben, who has been implicated in a string of human rights incidents. [redacted]

Comment: The High Command appears to appreciate the seriousness of human rights problems. But despite its assurances to senior US officials over the past several years that the military would punish offenders in a series of cases of interest to Washington, no officer has been convicted of a political murder. The release of soldiers involved in the politically motivated killings in 1988 has reinforced the perception that the military is immune from justice. [redacted]

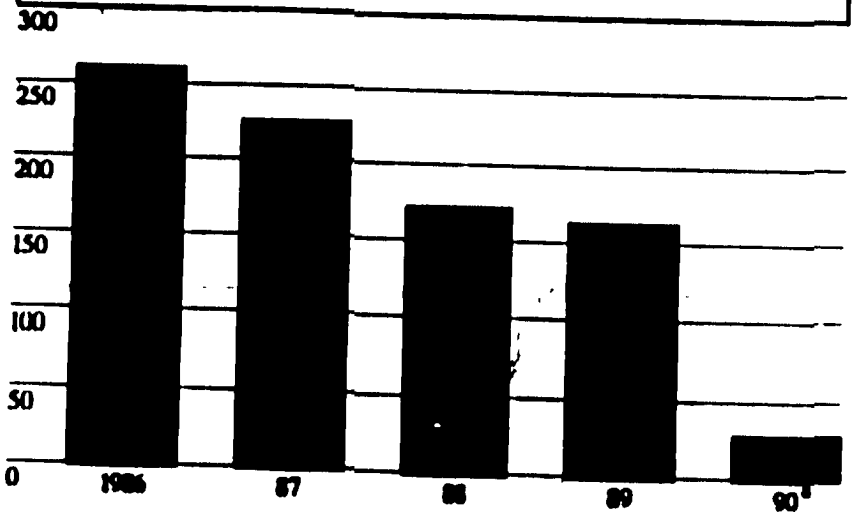
Approved for Release
NOV 1993

[redacted]

[redacted]

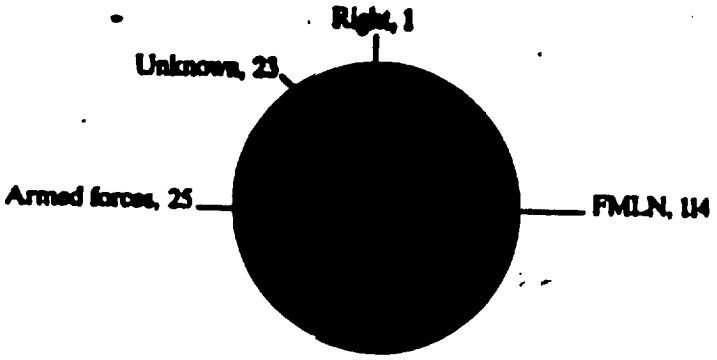
El Salvador

Political Killings



*As of March.

Perpetrators of Political Killings in 1989



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